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SUBJECT: FATAH-HAMAS RECONCILIATION TALKS TO RESUME JULY 25

Classified By: Deputy Principal Officer Greg Marchese  
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

#### Summary

¶1. (C) A sixth round of reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah representatives in Cairo ended June 30 without agreement. Fatah officials who participated in the talks blamed the continuing impasse on Hamas intransigence, citing Hamas's insistence on the release of all Hamas-affiliated prisoners held by the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a precondition. In press statements, Hamas officials blamed Fatah's refusal to match the "reconciliatory" positions recently adopted by Hamas. According to Fatah officials and local media, Egyptian officials plan to convene a seventh round of talks in Cairo on July 25, aiming for a formal agreement by July 28. End summary.

Talks Suspended June 30; to Resume July 25

¶2. (C) On June 27, Egyptian mediators re-convened reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas representatives in Cairo for a sixth round. Dialogue stopped on June 30 with the decision of Egyptian officials to defer further discussions. The talks are now scheduled to resume July 25, and the planned July 7 signing of a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement, which had been publicly announced by Egyptian officials, has now been delayed until July 28.

Despite Egyptian Pressure, Wide Gaps Remain

¶3. (C) Fatah officials noted that, despite the attempts of Egyptian officials to introduce bridging proposals enabling Fatah and Hamas to concur on internationally-acceptable terms for reconciliation, it had not been possible to close the gap between the two parties' positions on key issues, including:

- Prisoners: Hamas (according to Fatah officials) demanded the cessation of all PA arrests of Hamas members, as well as the release by July 4 of more than 900 Hamas-affiliated prisoners currently held in PA custody. Despite the June 29 release of 100 Hamas prisoners, intended by the PA as a goodwill gesture, Fatah officials noted that the PA plans to continue security operations and arrests of Hamas members carrying weapons in the West Bank;

- Elections: Disagreements persisted about the number of seats dedicated to national vs. district slates, with Hamas requesting that 60% of the PA's 132 seats be allocated at the national level, and Fatah countering with an 80% national allocation. Fatah's proposal that the number of electoral districts be reduced to four in the West Bank and

three in Gaza was rejected by Hamas, which argued for retention of the status quo (sixteen districts in the West Bank, seven in Gaza);

- Joint Security Force: Fatah and Hamas representatives were unable to reach agreement on the number of security personnel appropriate for the proposed Joint Security Force, which would be tasked with providing Gaza security; disagreements also surfaced in discussions about the proposed force's chain of command;

- Factional Liaison Committee: According to Fatah, the two parties continue to differ in their respective views of the purpose and mandate of the proposed Factional Liaison Committee, with Fatah viewing the committee as a venue for coordination between the two factions and the PA President, and Hamas proposing that it function as a liaison between governing authorities in the West Bank and Gaza.

#### Fatah Official Blames Hamas Intransigence for Delay

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14. (C) Fatah official Azam al-Ahmad, who had previously made public statements praising progress in the Cairo talks, said privately to PolSpec that he doubted Hamas had sincere intentions to reach an agreement. Al-Ahmad argued that Hamas's sole interest in the formation of a Factional Liaison Committee appeared to be the legitimization of Hamas control of Gaza. He also noted that the limited flexibility Hamas had displayed in dialogue on June 29 disappeared on June 30, with the appearance of a detailed draft agreement, suggesting that Hamas representatives pressured Egyptian officials to

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postpone the talks until the end of July because Hamas was "simply not ready" to reach an agreement.

#### Prisoners Issue Continues to Hold Center Stage

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15. (C) According to Fatah representatives present at the talks, Hamas representatives continued to precondition progress on the resolution of Hamas's demand that PA Security Forces cease all detentions of Hamas members in the West Bank and immediately release the more than 900 Hamas-affiliated prisoners currently held in PA custody. Majed Faraj, head of PA Military Intelligence and member of the Fatah delegation, told PolSpec that Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleyman had attempted to defend Fatah's and the PA's position on detentions to Hamas delegates, reasoning that the PA was entitled to take measures such as arrests to ensure public security, and pointing out that Egypt employed similar measures against Muslim Brotherhood members found breaking the law. Deep divisions on this issue persisted, with Hamas publicly labeling arrests as "political" that the PA considers justified on legal and security grounds, and Fatah members like al-Ahmad accusing Hamas of deliberately exaggerating the prisoners issue as a pretext for avoiding difficult compromises.

#### Subcommittees to Meet in Cairo in the Interim

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16. (C) Fatah official al-Ahmad noted that Egyptian mediator Suleyman had expressed frustration with the impasse, threatening at one point to abandon the dialogue. Despite this, al-Ahmad and other Fatah officials involved in the discussions characterized the Egyptians as committed to continuing their efforts to broker an agreement. To that end, a series of subcommittee meetings are apparently planned for July, with Egyptian mediators inviting Fatah and Hamas subcommittee attendees to draft an "agreement" that clearly defines issues of contention in writing. Fatah officials expressed pessimism about the prospect for progress, explaining that, in their view, the core issue remained Hamas's unwillingness to refrain from delaying tactics and

take decisive action towards reconciliation.  
WALLES